

NEW BRITAIN

INNER CITY BUSINESS STRATEGY INITIATIVE

CREATING JOBS, INCOME, AND
WEALTH FOR INNER CITY RESIDENTS



CREATING JOBS, INCOME, AND WEALTH

A market-oriented approach

The New Britain Inner City Business Strategy Initiative is a bold effort to tackle the city's most pressing challenge — extending today's economic prosperity to citizens who have been left behind. In a unique collaborative effort, business, government, and community leaders in New Britain have worked together to identify market-based opportunities for inner-city business growth that can create jobs, income, and wealth for local residents.

The Initiative represents an entirely new approach to inner-city revitalization. Rather than focusing on barriers to development, this approach identifies and taps the economic competitive advantages inherent in New Britain's inner city and emphasizes private, for-profit business development.

From June to December 1999, New Britain leaders have worked with the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC), a national nonprofit organization founded by Harvard Business School Professor Michael Porter, to conduct a rigorous assessment of New Britain's existing business base and its business environment. Their efforts have resulted in a strategic action plan for inner-city business growth and job development. Greg Howey, President of OKAY Industries, has championed this effort, committing his personal time and attention to ensuring its success.

In less than one year, the New Britain Inner City Business Strategy Initiative has accomplished the following results:

- More than 50 corporate, government, and community leaders are actively committed to inner-city economic development and ready to drive recommendations to implementation.
- More than 50 interviews have been conducted with inner-city companies, providing in-depth knowledge of the competitive advantages and disadvantages specific to New Britain's inner city.

- A detailed analysis of New Britain's inner-city economy, based on the industry clusters that drive its growth, is now available to guide decision-making.
- Detailed strategies and action plans have been developed for inner-city business growth in New Britain's four key clusters: metal manufacturing; hospitality, tourism, and leisure; health care and medical devices; and education and knowledge creation.

A call to action

The recommendations that follow present a clear timetable, laying the groundwork for action, accountability, and results. But recommendations alone are not enough. They must lead to action by community, business, and government leaders.

The Advisory Board urges leaders from all three sectors to join in an unprecedented collaboration to pursue results. With today's strong economy, there has never been a better moment to harness the power of free markets to renew New Britain's inner city, creating sustainable economic opportunities for its residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

New Britain's action plan for inner-city revitalization focuses on bolstering the following three key building blocks of inner-city economies: competitive urban businesses, a competitive city environment, and competitive inner-city residents.



I. BUILD COMPETITIVE URBAN BUSINESSES

Expand New Britain's business incubators

Significant opportunities exist for business development in commercial services, metal manufacturing, and health services in New Britain. In order to connect potential entrepreneurs to these growing opportunities, New Britain can expand existing incubator programs to target inner-city start-ups.

Through advice from cluster champions, the Institute for Industrial Engineering and Technology (IJET) will begin to expand its incubator program to include companies in each of these areas. Companies will receive additional support through connections to cluster champions.

Another incubator, housed in the Connecticut Enterprise Center (CEC) factory building, also has the potential to expand. The CEC incubator specializes in metal manufacturing, food packaging, and distribution businesses, and currently houses 16 companies. Through the addition of a freight elevator and build out of four more floors, the incubator could double in size.

Objectives for 2003:

- Assist in the start up of 25 companies.
- Help create \$6 million in revenues and stimulate the creation of 100 jobs.

Plan and implement a Routes 9 and 72 corridor development strategy

In order to take advantage of New Britain's central location and highway access, the city must continue to plan for the reuse of sites adjacent to the highway and/or located in the downtown area. For example, by expanding New Britain's SMART Park project (Shared Manufacturing Area for Regional Technology) through further land acquisition, the city can expand available space for manufacturing – including successful graduates of New Britain's incubators – and improve perceptions of the inner-city through blight removal. There are also 40 acres of available land at the former New Britain Machine Co. site. The city can also boost competitiveness by developing an Information Technology Zone with fiber-optic and broadband capabilities.

II. DEVELOP COMPETITIVE RESIDENTS

Create a regional health care training center

Employing more than 25,000 people, the New Britain health care cluster offers opportunities for entry-level work and upward mobility. A regional health care training center could link inner-city residents to these opportunities by providing job training, certificate training, continuing education, and career path advice. The training center would enhance the city's position as a hub of health services, enhance career options for inner-city residents, and provide demand-driven training services to major providers. The fee-for-service center would be client-supported and would not overlap with existing training services in the area.

Create a Vestibule Training Clearing House

Interviews with New Britain companies revealed a need to link area employers with job-ready applicants. To support local companies, New Britain will create a Vestibule Training Clearing House, co-located with the Mid-Connecticut Workforce Development Board. The Clearing House will coordinate the services of area providers and offer a single point of contact for employers. The Mid-Connecticut Workforce Development Board was selected because of its strong relationship with the Connecticut Department of Labor, area services providers and job

applicants. This model has been successfully tested in the development of a ready workforce for the New Britain SMART Park initiative. The initiative will strive to serve a wide range of inner-city employees, prevent redundancy of programs, and work in concert with the proposed Regional Health Care Training Facility.

Create a Willow Brook Sports Complex job training program

As a result of the growing demand for employees at the Willow Brook Sports Complex, a job-training program is necessary. A planning task force will be established to coordinate this training with the other training programs in the City of New Britain.

Objectives for 2000 – 2003:

- Train 200 inner-city residents and link them to jobs.



III. CREATE A COMPETITIVE CITY

Implement a coordinated strategy to improve perceptions of downtown New Britain and encourage more foot traffic for local businesses

New Britain has a number of thriving institutions with the potential to draw visitors to the city. These attractions include the New Britain Museum of American Art, the IIET Conference Center, and Veterans Memorial Stadium. To take full advantage of the associated business opportunities these institutions can offer, New Britain needs a coordinated strategy to improve perceptions of its downtown. The strategy might include redesigning key gateways to the city and developing new restaurants and shops to service visitors.

New Britain will assemble a group of business, government, and nonprofit leaders to lead the development of this strategy.

Implement a coordinated growth strategy for hospitality, tourism, and leisure

A number of opportunities exist in the hospitality, tourism and leisure cluster to increase the number of visitors to New Britain, impact their perceptions of the city, create jobs and business prospects, and link inner-city residents with these opportunities. Potential strategies include the following:

- IIET Conference Center expansion.
- Veterans Memorial Stadium upgrade.
- A major hotel.

The IIET Conference Center expansion will make room in the IIET building for more incubator activity and also allow for the expansion of the Conference Center, a thriving business itself. In the past year, it has hosted more than 400 events with over 30,000 visitors. Preliminary studies show that there is a growing market for this size and type of facility. A Tourism Research Center could be housed at this facility and use faculty from Central Connecticut State University.

The Veteran's Memorial Stadium is one of three existing stadiums in the Willow Brook Sports Complex. The Complex employs inner-city residents and attracts 250,000 visitors annually. An upgrade of the stadium will increase employment because of greater use. The stadium needs to be handicapped accessible. Increased concession areas, a press box, skyboxes, and improved lighting are also needed. A strategic collaborative planning task force will be established by the City to tackle planning for this project.

A major hotel is needed in the downtown area. There has been strong interest in a hotel by private investment. Growth in the hospitality, tourism, and leisure cluster will encourage additional investment in this important piece of the inner-city infrastructure. The hotel will provide employment for inner-city residents and be supported by CCSU's Hospitality and Tourism Program.

MOVING FORWARD

In less than one year, this Initiative has created unprecedented consensus and momentum behind inner-city revitalization across the city. Success will require sustained commitment across multiple constituencies to harness energy, resources, and leadership. By resolving to support these strategies and stimulate ongoing commitment, New Britain will make tremendous strides in advancing the economic prosperity of its inner-city residents.

By taking decisive action to implement this strategy, New Britain can:

- Prepare hundreds of inner-city residents to compete for skilled jobs with strong career paths and opportunities for advancement.
- Boost the competitiveness of its inner-city business environment, facilitating business growth and attracting new business.

- Create a strong base of inner-city businesses with access to the resources and assistance they need to expand and adapt to competitive pressures.
- Develop a pool of inner-city entrepreneurs poised to take on new business opportunities.
- Solidify ties among business, government, and community leaders, building the institutional infrastructure needed to promote and sustain long-term business development.
- Fundamentally alter the opinions and attitudes of customers, investors, and business professionals regarding viable business opportunities in New Britain's inner city.



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